

**PROTECTION AND PROMOTION OF TRADITIONAL
CRAFTS AND OCCUPATIONS IN GLOBALISING INDIA:
A CASE STUDY OF WEAVERS OF MAU
(UTTAR PRADESH)**

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Abstract

India is a combination of multiple worlds. At a time it lives in many centuries and cultures. The world of India's crafts persons spans millennia and spreads across the length and breadth of our rich land, which is apparently observed in cities, towns and in beautiful villages. India opened her market to the multinationals during the era of economic reforms, bringing an end to the license *raj*. Now world boundaries are eroding paving way to economic investment across the world, in which developed nation are penetrating and leading in underdeveloped market of third world. If we talk about Indian Artisans and their products handicrafts which are integral part of our society are in demand in Western consumers (Jena, 2010b). The cultural borders are eroding out and becoming irrelevant. The major concern in the Indian Handicrafts industry is that whether they can stand in front giant industrial products. Opening of Indian market had paved the way to foreign firms to produce daily needs and products for festivals, which are earlier produced by village artisans. This poses a big question for the survival of village artisans who are technically and financially poor. This paper observes the impact of liberalisation on community of weavers in district Mau and the opportunity they may have. Further, this paper will also discuss the governmental policy and programme for the promotion of traditional crafts.

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Introduction

India is a combination of multiple worlds. At a time it lives in many centuries and cultures. The world of India's crafts people spans millennia and spreads across the length and breadth of our rich land, which is apparently observed in cities, towns and beautiful villages (presently neglected in globalising India). Craft objects fabricated in a village has the capacity of becoming an item displayed in any museum of the world, yet the same object is often an object of utility for a particular community which never assumes it as great art. India poses a history of rich and diverse cultural tradition. Among its cultural diversity, the legacy of India's craft tradition always enjoys a special distinction owing to its beauty, dignity, style and aesthetics (NCERT, 2011).

The Term Craft: In India words for handicrafts are *hastkala* (Art of hand), *hastsilp* (fabrics of hand) and in Urdu *dastkari* (work of hand), and *karigiri* (artitecture). These terms connote handicrafts in India. These are indigenous skills of Artisans class in India. Upadhyay (1976) states "To write about Indian Handicraft is almost like writing about the country itself. So vast, complex and colourful and yet with a simplicity and charm, difficult to attain under comparable conditions" (p.1). Handicrafts are even today a lively aspect of our culture and society. It has been knotted with the culture of people in India from the beginning of the society. The variety of crafts available in India and their continuous development throughout the centuries make India a distinctive country in the world. The sector of crafts provides livelihood to a large population and makes huge contribution to India's foreign exchange. Carpet, gem, jewellery industries are leading export materials from India.

Indian craft legacy: Indian crafts has the same history that of Indian civilisation. The Indus valley civilisation (300 B.C to 1700 B.C) provides the first reference about the richness of the craftsmanship of artisans of India. 'It revolved around the religion belief systems of the people, the rituals they practice and the day to day needs of the general masses. The creativity and innovative talent of the artisans of all ages have been the testimony to this vast cultural asset (Jena, 2010a).

Post Mughal regime: During Mughal, artisan received state patronage but British occupation of

India devastated the handicrafts and textile sector of India. It used India as mere supply of raw material and in return finished goods were sold back in Indian Market (NCERT, 2006). Harnetty (1991) argues that “the cotton and silk textiles of Burhanpur, belonging to erstwhile central province of India, woven with gold-plated silver thread were exported as far as Turkey and Poland and were second only to the famous fabrics of Dacca and Surat’. But with advent of East India company (British India or Colonial India), it experienced the influence of western culture in every sphere of life Golden era of craftsmen began deteriorating owing to discriminatory colonial rule. Gandhi read the Romesh Chunder Dutt and uttered “I read Dutt’s economic history of India, I wept and I think of it again my heart sickens. It is machinery that has impoverished India. It is difficult to measure the harm that Manchester has done to us” (as cited in Jena, 2010a).

Globalisation: A Sociological dialogue

As per the Stanford Encyclopaedia of philosophy (2002),

“The term “globalisation” has quickly become one of the most fashionable buzzwords of contemporary political and academic debate. In popular discourse, globalization often functions as little more than a synonym for one or more of the following phenomena: the pursuit of classical liberal (or “free market”) policies in the world economy (“economic liberalisation”), the growing dominance of western (or even American) forms of political, economic, and cultural life (“westernisation” or “Americanisation”), the proliferation of new information technologies (the “Internet Revolution”), as well as the notion that humanity stands at the threshold of realising one single unified community in which major sources of social conflict have vanished (“global integration”).

‘Friedman refers globalisation as integration of market, finance, and technologies in a way that is shrinking the world from size medium to size small..... and enabling faster and cheaper move’(Giddens,2001).Giddens (1990) calls ‘globalisation as consequence of modernisation and as lateral extension of social connection’.

Presently geography owns only political importance. Social media and increasing dissemination of cultural programme through entertainment media, world is becoming more global or Glocal

(mingling of foreign with those of regional). Owing to greater control over information dissemination media, western culture rides over the other cultures of world. This supports their market expansion. People are sharing each other's wearing apparels. Even western cities are becoming plural in culture and people are sharing cultural goods of each other's, this is ensuring increase in demand of aesthetics and decorative goods prepared by artisans of Indian villages. In our Indian markets, one can avail American goods of eating's, wearing's and many others. Hollywood's personality uses Indian apparels providing opportunity to Indian designer to promote our culture through films and documentaries. But this is only symbolic they do not prefer in their day to day life.

Global assimilation

Rich and diverse cultural tradition of India is world acclaimed. It was and is part of religious and social life of India. It has received royal and aristocratic patronage. And artisans were highly honoured community. Artistic use of Wood, Stone, Metal, Textile, Clay and Ceramic makes the product unique and attracting. Abraham (1964) emphasises that "art and craft world is as valuable to those of science and philosophy. Art and crafts reflects the state of society and its richness". With gradual shift of time, India experienced the industrial development and global pressure to open her market for industrialisation. As a result it is apparently hampering the craft industry. In some cases it boosted too. India brought end to licenceraj (or controlled economic policy). Monopolies' of public sector were brought down and many sectors were open to private players. It opened door for Indian firms to access world market and they established their bases in number of countries.

In the year 1991 GDP (Gross Domestic Product) was mere 1.3% but subsequently in 1992-93 it reached to 5.3% , and in 1996-97 it reached to 7.8% and in 2005-06 reached 9% (Jena, 2010b), and approximately same continues with little variations. Presently India is fastest growing economy of the world. In India traditional handicrafts is poorly mechanised and most still depends on indigenous technology. Indian unorganised handicrafts are so vast and vital for employment that government must have to make it competitive through technological advancement.

Globalisation may have positive impact, if traditional artist were trained according to the needs of the market; if there products were made world class at cheaper rate. Benefit of globalisation lies in this strategy. Carpet weaved in India cannot be appropriately consumed in domestic market; it needs European and other market to meet its manufacturing expenses. Purchasing power of India as of now is very limited.

Highly skilled artist are our resources, they can produce exportable materials at their homes. If Indian handicrafts are lost, unemployment problem will be very complex to deal with. It has been producing export material for ages. Saraf (1991) provides that during 18th and 19th century India was known for its crafts rather than for religion and philosophy. In 1962 handicrafts and handloom Exports Corporation of Indian was established for promoting Indian handloom fabrics to the west. In present scenario, where efficiency ensures success, prospects of handicrafts are clandestine in spanning of products and increasing market. Present market is highly competitive to survive; handicrafts must follow market trend and fashion.

Objective:

In this paper I intend to deal with the discourses that globalisation is making a world, that is gradually becoming homogenous spreading the leading culture, i.e. *Maghribiyat* (Westernisation) across the world. Bureaucrats, News-readers, Politicians, Academicians, Youths and other section of society were becoming westernised in wearing style. This has uprooted the occupation, of traditional weavers of India and of elsewhere.

Methodology: Present context of study is District Mau (Eastern part of Uttar Pradesh). It is Muslim concentrated district. Its major industrial fabrication is *Banarsi Sari* and *Lungi* weaving. It is unorganised, home based industry. There are cases of increasing gulf migration, youth are leaving back rich ancestral base of weaving. This prompted me to know the reason, for the same I conducted Focused group discussion (FDG) and some interviews with the weavers (During July 2015 to September 2015).

It is presently a recognised fact that owing to globalisation, ideas, images, and information are

moving globally very fast. And many claim it, as the progression of cultural interconnectedness. Croucher (2004) opines that, in terms of printed matter, music, visual arts, cinema and photographic, radio & television equipment shows, the value of cultural imports and exports nearly increased from \$67 billion in 1980 to \$200 billion in 1991. Likewise the amount of world trade in cultural goods rose from 2.5 % of all imports in 1980 to 2.8 % in 1997. But this is unproportional, as developing nations failed substantially to promote their cultural goods to developed nations. Their traditional wearing is replaced with those of the west.

Rothkopf (1997) states that “It is in the interest of the United States (U.S) to encourage the development of a world in which the fault lines separating nations are bridged by shared interests. And it is in the economic and political interests of the U.S to ensure that if the world is moving toward a common language (it must be English), that if the world is moving toward common telecommunications, safety, and quality standards, they be American; that if the world is becoming linked by television, radio, and music, the programming be American” (emphasis added).

United Nations (U.N) report delivered in 1999 reveals that the combined wealth of the world's three richest families was greater than the annual income of 600 million people in the least developed countries (Croucher, 2004.p.23). It can be believed from the numerous statistical information that the West (*maghrib or paschatya*) is an advantaged part of the globe and enjoying the privileges in most of the arenas. Let us consider cultural sphere, the worldwide distribution of Levi's, McDonalds, MTV and Coca Cola-Pepsi-Cola has exposed growing adaptation of native cultures into the American culture, which may be said as Americanisation. Bhagwati (2004) argues out: “if the 19th century was British, a time of Pax-Britannica, and the 20th century was American, when Pax-Americana prevailed, the 21st century which many feared would be Japan's, a Pax-Japanica promises to be American again”.

Hence, in this background I analyse, the case of Indian handicrafts and craftspersons (weavers). This paper discusses how in the era of globalisation, Indian home based weavers of traditional apparels are thrown out of markets. There are cases of suicides in south Indian states particularly in Andhra Pradesh. News is in daily newspapers. Banarsi sari weavers are facing heat of

Chinese Silk imports and of duplicate Silk sari manufactured at Surat.

Globalisation of Crafts: Post -Liberalisation Indian society and economy has transformed immensely. It opened her economy and changed to globalisation in the early nineties. Foremost changes introduced as a part of the liberalisation strategy included abolition of the industrial 'license raj', decreasing in the number of areas earmarked for the public sector, modification of the dominations and the restrictive trade practices act, start of the privatisation, reduction in tariff rates and many others. Numbers of Indian establishments have started becoming reputable players in the Global scene. The liberalisation of the national economy and the increasing integration of India with the global economy have helped step up the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rates. In the year 1991-1992, the GDP growth was just 1.3 %, but in 1992-1993 it touched the figure 5.3 %. Year 1996-97 saw a high figure of 7.8 %. In 2003-2004, our GDP growth was 8.5 %, in 2005-06, 9.0 %, and in 2006-07 it was 9.2 %, (GOI, 2007).

Nonetheless, the forces of globalisation have plenty constructive effects in the long-run in several sectors of our economy and society; some of its prejudiced consequences against the deprived in many cases have concerned different scholars and planners in our country. The increasing opportunity for handicrafts in international market is observed when the Indian handiworks export crossed Rs 1220 crores in 1990-91 from just 10 crores in the mid-fifties (Vijayagopalan, 1993). Further, It had reached at the peak of Rs. 17 276, 71 Crores in 2005-06 (GOI, 2007).

At micro-level, it might be considered that handicrafts constitute a substantial segment of the decentralised part of its economy and it offers employment to masses of artisans distributed particularly in the weaker sections of society such as SCs, STs, Muslims and the women, making goods worth thousands of Crores of Indian Rupees per year. The Annual Report of various years of the Ministry of Textiles, Government of India suggests that the employment in this sector in 1997-98 was 52.92 lakhs which became 58.41 lakhs in 2001-02 and 60.16 lakhs in 2002-03. In 2005-06, 65.72 lakhs people were employed in this sector. Based on the National Council for Applied Economic Research (NCAER) survey of 1995-96, of the overall workers engaged in handicrafts, 47.42 % are women of which 37.11 % are coming under the backward communities like Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes. Indian handicrafts sector forms the second largest

employment sector -subsequent only to agriculture. The skilled hand of the craftsmen is its most significant and yet most imperceptible resource. It is to be perceived with concern and with a detailed thoughtful of its value. If it once vanished cannot be replaced.

Weavers in Post-Economic era

The ailment of weavers after the introduction of liberalisation (Economic reforms) has increased. It made the handloom weavers to experience serious deprivation. There are cases in daily newspapers of weavers' suicide. Cotton growers are committing suicide (Chalam, 2011). Williams (2011) writes that in all the areas of eastern U.P. nearly 10,000 have abandoned the weaving profession because of the lack of demand. The price of the raw material has gone up, but the product is not valued by consumers. This is causing unemployment. So people are becoming Rickshaw puller, labourer, hawker and *subzi-wala* (vegetable seller).

Wood (2014, pp. 48-49) writes that: "Since 1991, weavers of Varanasi have been abandoning the craft in droves, shifting to other occupation such as fishing, rickshaw driving, or construction work. In 1980s, Ansari wavers began investing in power looms. As power looms weavers have increasingly dominated the weaving industry in Varanasi, forcing handloom weavers out of business, power loom weavers themselves faced stiff competition from textiles mills in other parts of the country, particularly Surat and china, hits the entire Varanasi weaving industry hard...." Dayashankar (2004) reports in The Hindu daily about poor condition and closer of power loom in Sircilla (Andhra Pradesh) which forced weavers to opt for *bidis* rolling to meet the daily needs. Acharya (2012) in Tehalka magazine reports about the 'plight of weavers in Andhra Pradesh. It states that some shed worker receives a paltry Rs 65-70 a day's work. Quoting official estimations claims that nearly 900 debt-ridden weavers committed suicide from 2002 to 2012'.

Salvadore (2013) writes about poorerailment of weavers in India "On the one hand, we have the Indian Fashion industry celebrating the beauty of the Indian handloom on its ramps, both nationally and internationally, and on the other hand, a staggering number of weavers are ending their lives due to poverty and depts.". Devnath (2013) again of Times of India reports about three handloom weavers' suicide in Madurai district of Tamil Nadu on September 29, 2013.

Agreeing to Peoples' Vigilance Committee on Human Rights (PVCR) (2013) for the last 15 odd years, weavers in Varanasi have been grieved with the weakening of the weaving industry. Depression has arisen as a frequent illness as more weavers are unable to provide for their families, and has led to an increase in weavers' suicide.

Ahmad (2012) writes about Mau (earlier part of Azamgarh) is known for weavers from centuries. But now due adverse governmental policies weavers' situations are deteriorated. People were shifting toward other means of earning, moving to other cities and young generation is looking for Gulf nation. Garg (2015) in her analysis based on handloom census 2010 opines that the number of handloom is dwindling. Coming generation is sceptical and disinterested. Unfortunately it seems that handloom is on the verge of a sunset industry. The cause for this decline is weavers earning.

Evidence from Mau: This District is endowed with highly skilled Banarsi Sari weavers. But they are facing the heat of Indian economic and cultural globalisation. As discussed earlier due to control over mass media, west is promoting its all aspects of life particularly weaving tradition. *KurtaPaijama* and *Sari* has become weaving apparel for Occasion of religious and national festivals only. Hence its demand is diminishing and weavers are left with no option but to opt for other professions. One weaver reveals, "Now Television has promoted western dress, even Hindi News readers' wears western dress, traditional dress do not have any demand, hence our future is not very bright". Adding to this liberal economic policy provided space for Chinese cheap Silk import. Another weaver reveals "our country does not have infrastructure of that standard to compete with China and with Manchester textile products". Another weaver reveals 'that now present generation i.e. young weavers are no more interest in their age old ancestral profession, they are shifting to other professions and many are opting for and are in Gulf to earn livelihood, doing away with rich home based work as there is less demand of traditional dress'.

During Post-independence, government of India seriously intended to protect and promote traditional crafts. In fact it has enacted an act "The Handlooms (reservation of articles for production) Act, 1985". But, at present due to liberalised market system, craft industry faces helplessness. As there has been the evolution of the modern market economy, the artisans have

lost their holds over the old patron-client business network and *jajmani* relationship. In the globalisation times, nevertheless with their products going worldwide and aggregate demand for it, there is a rise in the handicraft sector economy, still the artisans have become more and more dependent on middle men and trader entrepreneurs who pay the artisans wages on piece rate bases. The government's initiative to create cooperatives has not succeeded much. Craft workers who have little formal education and are rarely organised are subject to many exploitative work conditions. Scrase (2003), states 'the opportunistic middle men exploit these precarious labour conditions to their financial benefit'.

Occupation Mobility: Most of the artisans are illiterate; they do not have formal education. Poverty makes them more vulnerable. As a result most of the artists are now a days choosing to shift to other professions rather than to stick into their hereditary occupation. Census conducted by National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) in 1995-96 submits that, the handloom sector boasts of 3.4 million weavers, whereas in 1987- 88, it was 4.3 million (Radhkrishna, 2007). Report by Biswas(2006) submits that the '*Keithel*', the traditional market run and managed by women in Imphal, Manipur is coming under attack. The Manipuri women sell their different coloured hand woven clothes. Report mentions that all over the Northeast, forces of globalisation, backed by domination of the state machinery are overthrowing the native women's markets and production centres.

Shrinking Home Market: India possesses a distinguished craft heritage. Subramanian (2006) however comments that the aim is not to use the craft goods just as a aide-mémoire of past brilliances but as a dynamic force to accelerate economic development. So the export of Indian handicrafts should not be seen as the only parameter of growth of this sector. There must be animetus from the home market, too. After Post-Economic reforms there is rise in middle-class and tourism industry has seen growth and people are interested in interior decoration but it is not powerful enough to boost crafts product consumption, it still depends on export to fetch appropriate pay.

Policy of Government and its Perception: It is dominated by the basic belief that economic efficiency and growth are achieved in the modern sector, and that the traditional sectors is mainly

for employment generation. The government continually reaffirms its commitment to support and encourage handloom weaving in India (Mukund&Sundari, 2001). Hence, handloom policy is aimed at strengthening the handloom sectors by focussing on four thrust area.

Organisational: A great emphasis is on “co-operative”. This is expected to provide inputs, credits and marketing channels and protect the weavers from exploitation.

*Modernisation:*Emphasis is on improving productivity and quality through improved looms. Institutions like weavers service Centres and Indian Institute of Handloom Technology would impart new skills.

*Protection and Subsidies:*These involve a package of schemes to boost the handloom sector. Provide yarn and credits at subsidised rate. Market Development Assistance(M.D.A) schemes funded by the state government agencies.

Welfare Schemes: Number of welfare schemes are designed and initiated to address the problem of weavers and promote their products to motivate them to pursue their ancestral jobs and to improve their life condition.

Under constitution of India Handicrafts falls under State subject. Every state is expected to ensure the promotion and protection of value crafts culture prevailing in the state. Traditional crafts are next to agriculture in providing employment this increases its importance immensely. It is the means of livelihood to lakh of Artisans in India. The Central government through various developmental schemes plays the role by supplementing their efforts. These are following.

Baba Saheb HastshilpVikasYojana (AHVY): this is a Cluster Specific scheme meant for promoting traditional crafts of India. This is made for sanctioning projects to the interested agencies and and assigned with the accountability of carrying out all the specialised intervention. Major goals are following

- Promoting premium handicrafts products for the niche market.

- Expansion of production base for utility-based, life style and mass production handicrafts products.
- Preservation and protection of heritage/languishing crafts

Comprehensive Handlooms Development Scheme- Central Government sponsored Plan :

“scheme is meant to support weavers, both within and outside the cooperative fold including self-help groups, NGOs etc. towards raw material, design inputs, technology up-gradation, marketing support through exhibitions, create permanent infrastructure in the form of Urban Haats, marketing complexes, setting up of Weavers Service Centre (WSCs) and Indian Institutes of Handlooms Technology (IIHTs), development of web portal for e-marketing of handloom products etc.”(Ministry of Textiles, 2013).

Integrated design and technology development project: “project has three essential components comprising design development, technology development, techniques/process and formulation and publication of crafts design/craft technology to the large number of artisans for their skill up gradation” (Ministry of Textiles, 2013).

Purchase of Computer Aided Textile Design System (CATD) System and Card Punching Machine: One time assistance upto Rs.5 lakh towards purchase of requisite hardware and software for Computer Aided Textile Design (CATD) System, colour forecast, trend forecast and other allied requirement, including card punching machine (if required). In case, only one item i.e. Computer Aided Textile Design System (CATD)

Community empowerment for mobilization of artisans into self-help groups (SHGs) /Societies:

- Conduct survey of each artisan in the prescribed format
- Mobilisation of artisans groups/SHG formation with office bearers,
- Holding awareness camps for cluster artisans, discussion and formation of Annual action Plan of the activities,
- Opening of Bank accounts of SHGs.
- Facilitating opening of Bank accounts of Individual artisans under Jan DhanYojna,

- Issue of Artisans' Identity Cards (AIC) to all cluster artisans.

Design and Technology Development Workshop: “objective workshop is to develop new prototypes to suit the tastes and preferences of contemporary market using the traditional skill of artisans and introduction of new techniques and technologies for enhanced production”.

Web Marketing: to support advertisements and other publicity activities on the web media and also creation of e-marketing platform.

Conclusion

In the year 1991 India opened its economic door and adopted the policy of liberalisation. In Sociology it is called globalisation, meaning herein amalgamation of different culture, economy and polity of world. This globalisation was even benefited and furthered by the development and easiness in air traffic. Developing nations were forced to open up their economy for developed nation under guidelines of WTO and other international institutions. Developed nation were endowed with natural resources and with highly skilled technologies and trained personnel. Their infrastructures were highly developed and unmatched with those of developing nations. On the other hand particularly India is land of traditional crafts and artisans, who are stick to their indigenous technology. Their products are for rural and domestic markets and to maintain their livelihood. Post-Independence initiatives were taken in several five year plans for up gradations of technologies and training programmes were initiated. But unfortunately half-heartedly, programme were more in bookish in nature and spells good on paper. It failed to empower our traditional artist by imbibing training and providing financial assistant.

Textile which is widely present in our country felt the heat of Economic Reforms most. Installation of big firms at Surat and cheap Chinese import had forced the unorganised weavers to opt for other Occupation. During visit to Mau and with interaction to the weavers it is revealed that young generation of weavers are disinterested in pursuing their age old family occupation. A considerable number of young weavers are in Gulf countries (Arab countries) as casual labour in construction sector and others. They emphasise that through globalisation western culture is induced in developing nations. Their traditional wearing are abandoned and replaced by western

style, their products are at Bay. Hence, future is dwindling and to manufacture present wearing apparels asks for big industrial set-up for which they do not have finance and further it is tough in unorganised sector. Thus, programme meant for particularly for weavers fails to motivate to pursue traditional occupation.

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